



F.O.C.U.S.



Facts on Concordia Undergraduate Students

May, 1998

Student Issues Deemed Important & Student Participation in University Life

In the winter of 1996, a survey was conducted at Concordia University with the purpose of better understanding student life. A random sample of 314 undergraduate students were surveyed and the respondents were asked a variety of questions pertaining to their experiences at Concordia. This study was part of a larger scale survey with 10 universities across Canada participating in the *1996 Survey of Undergraduate Experience at Canadian Universities*.

This bulletin deals with the results of two parts of the survey:

- 1) From a list of 16 issues, students were asked to indicate how important they thought each issue should be for their university. This was done by students marking a response of "Very Important", "Important", or "Not Important" to the issues presented.
- 2) Twelve aspects of campus life were presented and students were asked to indicate how frequently they participated. This was done by students marking a response of "Never", "Occasionally", "Often", or "Very Often" to the aspects presented.

Importance of Student Issues

All of the sixteen issues presented were rated as important to some degree by the majority of the students. The five issues which were rated as "Very Important" by the largest percentage of students were: "Keeping tuition increases at or below inflation rates" (76.8%); "Increasing emphasis on teaching excellence" (65.7%); "Protecting present student services from cutbacks" (60%); "Increasing work-study opportunities" (56.1%); and "Increasing student employment services" (51.5%). Even when the categories "Very Important" and "Important" are combined, these five issues are still the ones with the largest percentages of students rating them as important, although the rank order changes. The following five were viewed as the most important: "Increasing emphasis on teaching excellence" (97.4%);

"Keeping tuition increases at or below inflation rates" (96.9%); "Protecting present student services from cutbacks" (96.5%); "Increasing work-study opportunities" (95.1%); and "Increasing student employment" (94.9%).

A complete listing of the issues and the percentages the ratings received are illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1
Degrees of Importance of The Issues
as Seen by Concordia Students
In Percentages

Issues	Very Important	Important	Not Important
Reducing Undergraduate Class Size	25.9%	42.8%	31.3%
Increasing Emphasis on teaching excellence	65.7%	31.7%	2.6%
Promoting an increased sense of community among students	27.5%	57.5%	15.0%
Increasing course accessibility for mature & part-time students	37.0%	49.2%	13.8%
Increasing student parking	31.7%	27.5%	40.9%
Increasing opportunities for international study and exchanges	24.4%	57.7%	18.0%
Improving student academic advising	38.0%	55.6%	6.4%
Increasing campus daycare services	18.5%	57.5%	24.0%
Increasing student employment services	51.5%	43.4%	5.2%
Increasing work-study opportunities	56.1%	39.0%	4.8%
Helping students address alcohol and drug issues	26.1%	54.5%	19.4%
Helping students address AIDS-related issues	31.0%	51.0%	18.1%
Protecting present student services from cutbacks	60.0%	36.5%	3.6%
Increasing student services	33.6%	54.1%	12.4%
Keeping tuition increases at or below inflation rates	76.8%	20.1%	3.2%
Increasing university spending on financial aid	45.1%	45.1%	9.9%

Student Participation in university life

More than half of the students do not participate in university life. A majority of the students who responded to the survey indicated that they have never participated in the various activities offered at the university. Table 2 illustrates both the activities listed and the percentage that each response received.

According to the information found in Table 2, the majority of the respondents did not participate in the activities offered at the university during the academic year. Even the activity with the highest participation rate, "Attended campus social events" has a participation rate of less than 50%. The five activities which had the highest percentage of students indicating participation were "Attended campus social events" (43.9%); "Attended campus lectures (in addition to regular classes)" (42.9%), "Attended campus cultural events (theatre, concerts, art exhibits, etc.)" (41.0%), "Visited the campus for extracurricular events" (38.9%), and "Used campus fitness or exercise facilities" (24.3%).

The findings are not surprising in view of the fact that the majority of Concordia students are currently employed. The survey indicated that 57.8% of Concordia students are currently employed and another 22.7% are currently seeking work. So one can see that in terms of time management and time usage priorities, the findings are in line with the particular nature of Concordia's student population.

Interestingly, there was not a statistically significant correlation between the self-reported grades of the students and the participation rates in the university's activities.

Table 2
Participation in University Life
In Percentages

Aspect of University Life	Never	Occasionally	Often	Very Often
Attended campus social events	56.1%	39.7%	2.6%	1.6%
Attended campus lectures (in addition to regular classes)	57.2%	30.7%	7.7%	4.5%
Attended campus cultural events	59.0%	34.0%	6.4%	0.6%
Visited the campus for extracurricular events	61.0%	31.6%	5.4%	1.9%
Used campus fitness or exercise facilities	75.7%	13.7%	7.7%	2.9%
Participated in student clubs	76.6%	14.4%	5.5%	3.5%
Attended home games of university athletic teams	78.6%	16.6%	2.6%	2.2%
Participated in student intramural athletic programs	91.5%	6.1%	1.3%	1.6%
Participated in student government	93.3%	4.8%	1.0%	1.0%
Served as a peer advisor	95.5%	3.5%	0.6%	0.3%
Participated in campus drama or music productions	96.2%	2.6%	1.0%	0.3%
Participated in fraternities or sororities	97.8%	0.6%	0.6%	1.0%